

ELY DIOCESAN MOTHERS' UNION

THURSDAY PRAYER

AUGUST 19th 2021

19th August at 11am and the Zoom link - 837 5926 3332 (no password).

Welcome everyone to our August Thursday Prayer, focusing on Mary Sumner.

"Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'whom shall I send, and who will go for us?' And I said, 'Here am I; send me!'" [Isaiah 6.8]

145 years ago Mary Sumner heard this voice, today we celebrate her achievements and thank God for her vision that became Mothers' Union.

Let's all say Mary Sumner's personal prayer.

All this day O Lord, let me touch as many lives as possible for thee; and every life I touch do thou by thy spirit quicken, whether through the word I speak, the prayer I breathe, or the life I live. Amen

BIBLE READING Luke 1: 46 - 48 (The Message)

And Mary Said, I'm bursting with God-news; I'm dancing the song of my Savior God. God took one look at me, and look what happened - I'm the most fortunate women on earth!

MARY SUMNER

Well, look what did happen, when Mary felt that the mothers in her parish were in need of help and with the encouragement of her husband Mary brought the mothers together to form a support group.

The meetings grew and included women old and young, rich and poor. Others heard about the work and started groups in their own parishes.

In 1876 the Union of Mothers was founded. The movement continued to grow along with Mary's confidence to speak in public. Her dream was for every home to be filled with the light and hope of Jesus, and for the movement to unite many hearts in many lands, nurturing healthy environments for families and children. I wonder what Mary would think if she could see our new Connected magazine?

From 1900 onwards, Mary and members started to advocate on issues of key importance to families and children. Campaigning to stop children collecting alcohol from public houses for their families, and the age of marriage for girls to be raised from 12 to 16.

145 years later, life is very different, there are many groups and activities where families can find support, but there will be some who struggle to find these. During the long months of Covid restrictions many new mothers haven't been able to meet others, or sometimes their own families, as they would have done previously.

I asked my branch members for their thoughts on Mary Sumner.

"I think Mary Sumner would be amazed at the lives mothers have the ability to lead nowadays, and which we take for granted. I think she might think we are lacking in the knowledge of God as example, friend and support."

" Mary would be disappointed by the manners, actions and language of some young people, who are lacking guidance from their families."

"Mary Sumner would be very pleased that we still follow the Mothers' Union Aims and Objectives."

" The Mothers' Union prayer has changed several times in our 145 years, but still follows Mary Sumner's vision."

And Mary and the pandemic.

"When I read what is written about Mary Sumner, I imagine that she would have seen the opportunity in the pandemic. Those such as Sir Tom Moore, I expect that she would have found inspiring, I expect that she would have been clapping for the NHS. However I think she would have been moved into action. We know that through the pandemic, families and individuals have struggled in many different ways. I imagine that her Christian faith would have moved her into seeking out those in needs – serving in foodbanks, ensuring that children got laptops to be able to join in remote education and I have no doubt that she would have been on board with online worship. She was a woman who spoke into the heart of Jesus and then put this into action"

"We have all faced so many emotions during this pandemic with fear, hope, love, care, tiredness and many other things coming into play at different times. We have had to try and model behaviour to help the other. Where we have felt fear, we have tried to find the hope. Where we have come to the end of our rope, we have had to find ways of moving forwards when the usual strategies are not things that we can do.

I think that during this time, people have looked to bolster others, to reach out to those in need and to be generally nicer people. I think Mary Sumer would have been part of this and encouraged others in their lives and to keep going. I think she would have had the welfare of families at the centre of her outreach."

"Over these last 18 months, I think we have learnt something of care for everyone. We know with the vaccine that we are not safe until all are safe. There are many campaigns to raise money for vaccines in other countries and I think she would have backed this and supported this. We saw the huge rise of Covid in India and felt helpless as Covid rushed through the country. I think that Mary Sumner would have been at the forefront of vaccine campaigns. She would have been working to highlight issues such as climate change where the poorest in the world are suffering most. Mary Sumner's vision was bigger than her own back garden and it highlights to us, that our vision should be bigger too."

" Mary Sumner said "A true home should be a light-house, shedding it's quiet beams far and wide" I think Mary Sumner might quite like the song Shine Jesus Shine. We want our Christian faith to be seen in our communities."

Shine Jesus shine, fill this land with the Father's glory.
Blaze Spirit blaze, set our hearts on fire.
Flow river flow, flood the nations with grace and mercy.
Send forth your word Lord and let there be light.

When Mary died in August 1921, after a truly remarkable and inspiring life, 4,000 women attended her funeral, which was a service of Thanksgiving. The last memory was one of her, on her feet in the sunlight, praising God.

I think she would be amazed at what Mothers' Union has achieved since those early days.

2021 marks 145 years of Mothers' Union. In prayer, we give thanks for the service and inspiration of members across the years and across the world.

PRAYER _____

Lord of all we give you thanks for the far-reaching vision of our founder, Mary Sumner. We look back with praise and gratitude for her witness and the way she has inspired so many people. Our members worldwide have been beacons of hope for their communities, both with prayer and practical help, bringing joy and reflecting the love of our Saviour Jesus Christ. We pray that we will be able to continue her vision, ensuring that the role of Mothers' Union will flourish and grow as we unite to be helping hands across the world.

Heavenly Father, we give heartfelt thanks for 145 years of Mothers Union, for the gathering of women together to be a wave of prayer to take the Love of Christ into their homes and to spread your word to every home. Strengthen and bless all our members around the world as we carry out your mission. Amen

INTERCESSIONS _____

Lord, we bring before you the work of Mothers' Union, our worldwide president Sheran Harper and all who work at Mary Sumner house. We pray for our diocesan president Hazel and all involved in the activities, work and branches in the Ely diocese.

We give thanks for the technology, of Zoom, that has enabled us to join together for these prayers and for the newsletters produced each month.

We pray for the work of Mothers' Union throughout the world and especially our friends in our link countries of Rwanda, Zambia, Nigeria and India.

We pause for a few moments to bring before you anyone we know who is in need.

Almighty God, we offer these prayers for those who are in need of your mercy; those with broken hearts, broken lives, illness, worry. Bless them with your healing grace, radiate you healing power and fill them with gladness and hope. Amen

The Mothers' Union Prayer (say together)

Loving Lord, we thank you for your love so freely given to us all. We pray for families around the world. Bless the work of the Mothers' Union as we seek to share your love through the encouragement, strengthening and support of marriage and family life. Empowered by your Spirit, may we be united in prayer and worship, and in love and service, reach out as your hands across the world. Amen

The Thursday Prayer

Heavenly Father, you have called us apart to share in a worldwide fellowship of Christians united in prayer. Take our prayers we humbly ask, fill them with your love and power, and use them in the cause of your glorious kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

HYMN

Let's think about Mary's vision and our vision of Mothers' Union as we all sing;

Be Thou my vision, O lord of my heart;
Nought be all else to me, save that Thou art;
Thou my best thought, in the day and the night,
Waking or sleeping, Thy presence my light.

Be Thou my wisdom, be Thou my true word;
I ever with Thee, and Thou with me Lord;
Thou my Great Father, and I Thy true son;
Thou in me dwelling and I with Thee one.

Be Thou my breast-plate, my sword for the fight;
Be Thou my armour, and be Thou my might.
Thou my soul's shelter, and Thou my high tower:
Raise Thou me Heavenward, O power of my power.

Riches I heed not, nor man's empty praise,
Thou mine inheritance, through all my days:
Thou and Thou only, the first in my heart,
High King of Heaven, my treasure Thou art.

High King of Heaven when the battle is done,
Grant Heaven's joy to me, bright heaven's sun!
Christ of my own heart, whatever befall,
Still be thou my vision, O Ruler of all.

Let's all say the grace, unmuted.